

# **A Supervisor's Guide to NOAA Commissioned Officers**



**Office of Marine and Aviation Operations  
Commissioned Personnel Center  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
I	BACKGROUND	3
II	COMMISSIONED PERSONNEL CENTER	3
III	NOAA CORPS DIRECTIVES	4
IV	ASSIGNMENTS	4
V	OFFICER EVALUATION SYSTEM	4
VI	MERIT AWARDS	5
VII	LEAVE AND LIBERTY	6
VIII	TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION	6
IX	DISCIPLINE	6
X	PART-TIME UNIVERSITY TRAINING	7
XI	OFFICERS LEAVING THE NOAA CORPS	7
XII	CPC SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE	7

## I BACKGROUND

The NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps is an integral part of NOAA, and the smallest of the seven uniformed services of the United States.

The original Corps had an authorized strength of 124 officers and worked almost exclusively in hydrographic and geodetic operations. The men and women of today's NOAA Corps operate ships, fly aircraft, lead mobile field parties, conduct diving operations, manage research projects, and serve in staff positions around the globe, throughout NOAA, and in other government agencies.

The heritage of the NOAA Corps can be traced to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey which dates back to 1807 and President Thomas Jefferson. The Survey first used Navy officers for coastline surveying and Army officers for chorused surveying. Army and Navy officer were unavailable during the Civil War, so civilian assistants operated the ships and field parties. During the Spanish-American War, Navy officers were withdrawn, never to return. Their commands reverted to civilian assistants, who carried on field activities until 1917. A military personnel system was established by the Act of May 22, 1917, to meet the Survey's unique needs. This act created a new uniformed service of commissioned officers and authorized a transfer to the military in time of national emergency.

In 1970, NOAA was created to develop a coordinated approach to oceanographic and atmospheric research. Subsequent legislation converted the commissioned officer corps to the NOAA Corps. The new NOAA Corps was designed to provide a pool of professionals for remote, hazardous, or otherwise arduous duties, frequently on short notice. Officers are trained in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering and serve in OMAO and each of NOAA's five major program areas: NWS, NOS, NMFS, NESDIS, and OAR.

## II COMMISSIONED PERSONNEL CENTER

The Commissioned Personnel Center (CPC) is a Center within the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO).

CPC manages all aspects of the NOAA Corps personnel system, including officer recruitment, training, assignment, travel, transportation, career development, payroll, health care, records maintenance, and all routine and special personnel actions. CPC is responsible for allocating officer resources to render maximum service to NOAA program users. **PLEASE CONTACT CPC WHENEVER QUESTIONS CONCERNING NOAA CORPS OFFICERS ARISE.** A CPC telephone directory and organization chart are provided on the NOAA Corps website at <http://www.noaaacorps.noaa.gov> under CONTACTS.

### **III NOAA CORPS DIRECTIVES**

The NOAA Corps Directives (NCD) are established and issued in accordance with authority delegated by the Secretary of Commerce to the Director, NOAA Corps. The Directives can be found at [www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/procedures/directives.html](http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/procedures/directives.html). CPC Staff is available to address any questions related to these Directives.

A copy of the NOAA Corps Directives is issued to each officer upon entry on active duty. Updates and changes are posted on the CPC website. Officers are notified of changes to the Directives via the CPC biweekly electronic newsletter, the CPC CyberFlash. Individual officers are responsible for maintaining currency.

### **IV ASSIGNMENTS**

The NOAA Corps assignment process is designed to emphasize career development and incorporate input from senior managers. Directives concerning officer assignments are contained in NCD Chapter 5. The Assignment Coordinator and the Chief, Career Management Division, work closely with the Officer Assignment Board (OAB) in determining officer assignments. The OAB members also serve as the NOAA line office liaison officers and are assigned to positions with access to senior NOAA management. They work closely with senior managers to help identify billets to be filled. OAB members are issued a volume of career summary sheets for each officer. This volume contains sufficient background information to facilitate selection of the most qualified officer for upcoming assignments.

Managers should contact the appropriate liaison officer for specific officer assignment information. Current NOAA Corps Liaison Officers and contact information may be found on the NOAA Corps website at <http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/careermgmt/assignments.html>

### **V OFFICER EVALUATION SYSTEM**

The NOAA Corps Officer Evaluation System (OES) has been designed to:

1. Provide information for important personnel management decisions. Especially significant among these decisions are promotions, assignments, and career development.
2. Set performance and character standards to evaluate each officer.
3. Prescribe organization values by which each NOAA Corps officer can be described.
4. Provide a means of feedback to determine how well an officer is measuring up to the standards.

Officer Evaluation Reports (NOAA Form 56-6A and B) shall be submitted by each officer's rating chain.

The intent of the submission schedule is for officers with an annual or semiannual reporting period to be evaluated as closely to those frequencies as possible. While every effort has been made to accommodate possible deviations to the schedule, unusual circumstances may dictate the submission of reports, or not allow their submission, which may be contrary to the intent of the OES.

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>MONTH</b>
Captain	October 31
Commander	October 31
Lieutenant Commander	November 30
Lieutenant	November 30
Lieutenant (Junior Grade)	January 31 and July 31
Ensign	January 31 and July 31

Information, instructions and OER forms are available at [www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/careermgmt/evaluation.html](http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov/cpc/careermgmt/evaluation.html).

## **VI MERIT AWARDS**

Officers who perform exceptionally well may be recognized with one of nine merit awards. The most common awards are the NOAA Corps Director's Ribbon, the NOAA Corps Achievement Medal, and the NOAA Corps Commendation Medal. Eligibility requirements and nomination procedures for these awards are outlined in NCD, Chapter 12.

These awards may be given for sustained superior performance, generally expected to cover a period of at least a year, or special acts. Nominations should be made promptly using the Recommendation for Award, NOAA Form 56-63. In accordance with NCD, Chapter 12, CPC requires submission of nominations **within 120 days** of a special act or end of sustained rating period. When an officer receives an end-of-tour award, and is transferred, the award package will be sent to the officer's new duty station, with a copy of the transmittal memorandum to the nominating authority.

Only one award may be made for a particular act or period of time. For example, if an officer is given a Special Achievement Award for sustained superior performance for a year of a tour of duty, he/she may not be given a Commendation Medal to recognize the entire tour. Contact CPC for more information.

## **VII LEAVE AND LIBERTY**

Leave, liberty, and administrative absence policy is based on the policies of the Armed Forces. Chapter 6 of the NOAA Corps Directives provides the policies governing leave and liberty. The Officer Leave Request and Authorization Form (NOAA Form 56-12) is used for requesting and authorizing all regular leave, emergency leave, sick leave, and special liberty.

Officers are on call 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, and must be reachable by the supervisor at any time. An officer on leave is to carry the original endorsed leave slip at all times. The leave granting authority (supervisor) will keep the duty station copy of the completed slip. When the officer returns from leave, complete the certification, block 16, of the original slip and ensure it is sent to CPC.

**Sick leave** is not charged to the leave account. However, use of sick leave is tracked by CPC. Endorsed leave slips must be sent in to CPC to document all periods of sick leave.

Officers may carry no more than 60 days accumulated leave from one fiscal year to the next. Accumulated leave greater than 60 days will be lost on October 1. Supervisors should encourage officers to take enough leave to avoid loss. Block 9c, Current Leave Balance, is a tracking tool.

Contact CPC with specific questions on leave administration.

## **VIII TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION**

NOAA Corps officers are subject to the policies and procedures of the Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR), unlike civilian employees who are subject to the policies of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR).

When officers are required to perform temporary duty away from their duty stations (outside of the local commuting area), they must be under orders issued by the appropriate authority. Officers' TDY orders may be written using the current NOAA order issuing system.

## **IX DISCIPLINE**

NOAA Corps officers are held to standards of conduct described in the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, Department of Commerce's Standards of Conduct, NOAA Administrative Orders, and NCDs. NCD Chapter 7 covers disciplinary authority, measures, and procedures. Disciplinary action may be taken where other administrative measures are considered inadequate or inappropriate and more stringent measures are required to correct, educate, and reform an offending officer or deter others from similar conduct.

The Officer Evaluation Report is NOT an appropriate forum for addressing misconduct. The OER is to be used to rate performance only.

The rating supervisor is the primary disciplinary authority, and may administer informal disciplinary measures including oral admonishment, letter of administrative censure (kept by the supervisor; not entered into the officer's Official Personnel File), or letter of reproof (entered into the officer's Official Personnel File for a period of 3 years, then automatically removed). In administering discipline, care must be taken to ensure due process and respect the rights of the officer involved. More stringent measures require action by a flag officer in command. If the supervisor believes his/her authority may be insufficient to properly dispose of the matter, it shall be referred up the chain of command for disposition. The flag officer in command of officers assigned to headquarters or line offices is the Director, NC. For those officers assigned to Marine Operations Center or Aircraft Operations Center, the flag officer in command is the Director, Marine and Aviation Operations Centers.

Contact CPC for guidance or further information.

## **X PART-TIME UNIVERSITY TRAINING**

NOAA Corps officers are encouraged to pursue career-developing education to promote job satisfaction, ensure responsive service, and enhance promotion potential. If an officer's work schedule will accommodate part-time university training, supervisors are invited to support an officer's educational development. Eligibility requirements and request procedures for part-time university training are outlined in NCD, Chapter 4, Part 1.

## **XI OFFICERS LEAVING THE NOAA CORPS**

NOAA Corps officers leaving active-duty service, as a result of discharge or retirement, are required to comply with the NOAA Corps Directives Administrative Requirements listed in Chapter 8 of the NOAA Corps Directives. Supervisors should ensure the officer has complied with the particulars of this regulation.

## **XII CPC SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE**

Any questions should be directed to the appropriate CPC Source of Assistance. The CPC Directory is available at <http://www.noaacorps.noaa.gov> under CONTACTS.